

Baltimore & Ohio Railroad:
Queen City Hotel and Station
Cumberland
Allegany County
Maryland

HAER No. MD-4

HAER
MD,
1-CUMB,
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS

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Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

BALTIMORE AND OHIO RAILROAD: QUEEN CITY HOTEL AND STATION

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Location: West side of Park Street, opposite Ann Street
Cumberland, Allegany County, Maryland

Dates of Construction: Began on July 1, 1871; opened in November 1872

Original Use: Hotel and Train Station

Present Use: Demolished 1972

Present Owner: N/A

Significance: The Queen City Hotel was one of five combination station-hotels built by the B & O during the 1870s. It was designed by Thomas N. Heskett of the railroad's road department, was Italianate in style, and was "opened for the accommodation and entertainment of passengers" in 1872. Though no longer used as a hotel after the demise of rail passenger ridership following World War II, the Queen City was one of the last remaining grand, railroad hotels in the United States at the time of survey.

The station-hotel was highly ornamented. The most notable features were the wooden cupola centered over the main entry and the floral, cast-iron trelliswork that supported the roof of a broad porch that extended across the entire trackside facade of the building.

In addition to the building's outstanding architectural significance, it was also important for its sociological associations.

Transmitted by: Jean Yearby, HAER, 1984, from data compiled by Mrs. Preston Parish, Keeper of the Maryland Register, Maryland Historical Trust, 1971

The close association of the Queen City with the community is indicative of the special role hotels of this type played in American communities during this period. Daniel Boorstin in The Americans: The National Experience explains the important role hotels played in pre-Civil War America. The hotel was a community "institution"--a social center for both private and public gatherings. Hotels filled with the latest gadgets and most luxurious equipment were the showplace of any American city or town to which a railroad reached. To small growing communities, the hotel symbolized an urban status. Although Boorstin's discussion relates to a period four decades before construction of the Queen City, his observations do apply as evidenced by its use by the citizens of Cumberland. Wedding receptions traditionally took place at the Queen City Hotel; newly-married couples often lived there before establishing a permanent Cumberland residence. An annual New Year's Dance--the height of the Cumberland social season--was held there.

In addition to its importance to the local community, the Queen City Station-Hotel served as a summer resort. Located in a valley surrounded by mountains, it provided an escape from the summer heat. The year the hotel was finished, the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Company expanded its resort business by beginning the construction of the Deer Park Hotel in Garrett County. The latter resort hotel was destroyed by fire.

The Queen City Hotel was built only a year after the Baltimore and Ohio completed its rail connection to Pittsburgh. This placed Cumberland as a major junction of the route northwest to Pittsburgh and the main line west to the Ohio River.

As an example of late nineteenth century Italianate architecture, sometimes called the "President Grant" style, the Queen City Hotel exemplifies a period of American taste, part of our architectural heritage. Efforts to preserve this ornate, Victorian-era structure was one of the classic preservation battles of the early 1970s. The battle was lost when the building was demolished in 1972.

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